

Message Text

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72

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 AID-20 PC-10 EB-11 COME-00 AGR-20 DRC-01

/180 W

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R 061220Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7402

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 1693

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, EGEN, IV

SUBJ: IVORY COAST: DANGER SIGNAL

1. MY FINAL IMPRESSIONS ON LEAVING IVORY COAST CONFIRM MOST OF WHAT THE EMBASSY HAS ALREADY WRITTEN ABOUT THIS COUNTRY. PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET HAS THE SITUATION WELL IN HAND AND SEEMS LIKELY TO REMAIN IN POWER FOR SOME TIME TO COME. THE COUNTRY IS CALM, RECEIVES UNPRECEDENTEDLY HIGH PRICES FOR ITS PRINCIPAL EXPORTS AND PURSUES ITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ALL DIRECTIONS WITH UNRELENTING ENERGY.

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2. BUT THERE IS ONE CLOUD ON THE HORIZON THAT CANNOT BE IGNORED.

THE WORLD-WIDE PHENOMENON OF INFLATION IS BEGINNING TO HIT THIS COUNTRY HARD. PRICES OF BASIC FOODSTUFFS AND OTHER COMMODITIES ESSENTIAL TO THE MAN IN THE STREET ARE RISING RAPIDLY, AND WAGE INCREASES, ALTHOUGH RECURRENT, ARE NOT KEEPING PACE. PUBLIC FACILITIES ARE NOT ADEQUATE TO THE NEED.

3. THE PROBLEM IS COMPOUNDED BY THE UNCOUNTED NUMBERS OF POOR PEOPLE MIGRATING FROM THE FARM TO THE CITY AND FROM THE SURROUNDING AFRICAN COUNTRIES. IVORY COAST HAS AN OPEN IMMIGRATION POLICY AND SUCH CONTROLS AS EXIST ARE EASILY CIRCUMVENTED. THE TWO GREAT POPULAR QUARTERS OF TREICHVILLE AND ADJAME IN THE CITY OF ABIDJAN ARE TEEMING WITH PEOPLE LIVING ON VERY LITTLE. THEFT IS ON THE RISE, OFTEN CARRIED OUT BY ORGANIZED BANDS.

4. IVORIANS ARE NOT A VOLATILE PEOPLE, BUT RATHER IMMENSELY PATIENT AND LONG-SUFFERING. THE FOREIGN AFRICANS, FOR THEIR PART, WOULD SEEM TO HAVE EVERY REASON NOT TO ROCK THE BOAT AND THEREBY RISK EXPULSION.

5. STILL, THE EMBASSY WILL HAVE TO PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE TREND OF POPULAR FEELING IN THE CROWDED SECTIONS OF THE CITIES, PARTICULARLY ABIDJAN. CIVIL DISORDER - WHICH I DO NOT AT ALL AT THIS POINT PREDICT - COULD WELL START THERE.
ROOT

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